

The health care professionals in my State of South Dakota have been coming up with some innovative ways to deal with the distance problem. They have been using technology to bring patients and doctors together. They call this breakthrough "telehealth."

Telehealth is a method of health care delivery that was at, one time, a new concept in health care, a theoretical way to connect people with providers. But telehealth is no longer an experiment. This is a service being used every day in rural areas across this country.

I saw some of the most amazing things our health care providers are doing with telehealth technology. Lung specialists in Sioux Falls are using electronic stethoscopes to treat patients with pneumonia who live in Flandreau. Flandreau is a town with just over 2,000 people. They cannot get to see a specialist like that unless they travel or the specialist travels to them. That is pretty expensive when they start adding up gasoline and loss of productivity due to time on the road.

They are also using telehealth to provide health care on American Indian reservations. The Pine Ridge Reservation, which sits in the Nation's poorest county per capita, is over 130 miles from the area's main medical center in Rapid City. Many residents of Pine Ridge deal with depression. They would like to see a mental health professional but have to wait 3 months to get an appointment. But using two-way interactive video cameras, they can now have access to these professionals and get timely and appropriate care.

Those are just some of the ways that patients are getting the care that they need. It is clear that telehealth services have become critical for these patients and the providers who care for them. But this kind of care is expensive.

Currently, hospitals are using grants to fund these services. Grants are limited and do not last forever. When the grants dry up, patients will have to go back to the old ways of doing things. What is needed is a more permanent method of paying for these services, and that is where Medicare comes in.

Back in 1997, Congress authorized several telehealth demonstration projects to study the impact of telehealth on health care access, quality, and cost. The projects have shown that telehealth promotes better access and quality and could be used to provide both primary and specialty care at a reasonable cost. Given the success of telehealth, it is now time for Medicare to begin paying for these services.

But Medicare has created reimbursement policies that have had the effect of excluding these services to those patients who would derive the most benefit from them, seniors who are often unable to travel long distances for direct health care.

I thought Medicare was put in place to help our senior citizens get the care they need. But that is not the case with telehealth services. Medicare covered only six percent of all telehealth visits in 1999 clearly when Congress intended that Medicare would pay a little bit more for these critical services.

With these facts in mind, I introduced H.R. 4841, the Medicare Access to Telehealth Services Act of 2000. This bill tries to eliminate some of the reimbursement barriers that prevent hospitals from providing these services and seniors from accessing them. It is no longer the case that where they live needs to determine what kind of care they receive.

Now, I realize that telehealth is just one piece of the health care puzzle. There are many other aspects of the Medicare law that need to be revisited. Rural hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes are reeling from the effects of the Balanced Budget Act.

Last year, Congress provided some initial relief with the Balanced Budget Refinement Act. That was the first step toward helping our rural health providers deliver the kind of care our citizens deserve.

Now we are poised to take another step. As my colleagues know, members of the Committee on Commerce and the Committee on Ways and Means are now considering a legislative package that would further refine the BBA. Part of that refinement needs to include telehealth services. Congress understood the potential of this technology 3 years ago. It is time to reduce those barriers that keep it from being used effectively.

I urge the members of the committee to include the provisions of my legislation in their add-back bill. Congress has made a commitment to modernize Medicare, and reimbursing for telehealth services is one way to do that.

#### MILLION MOM MARCH AND COMMON SENSE GUN SAFETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHERWOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking. The clock is ticking and this Congress has yet to hear the message delivered by the one million mothers on May 14 of this year.

An extraordinary thing happened this past Mother's Day when so many New Jerseyans joined families from all over the United States in the "Million Mom March" here in Washington.

Now, all of us know it, Mr. Speaker. Over the last years, our Nation has been shaken deeply by incidents of gun violence. All of us were floored by the tragedy in a Michigan elementary school where a 6-year-old child, a child who had not yet learned to read, had learned how to kill with a handgun.

That was just the latest in a long line of gun-related tragedies. We know the litany. Columbine, West Paducah, Jonesboro, Conyers, and in too many other communities across America. These have been matched by countless other gun tragedies less public but no less tragic for their families and their communities all across the Nation.

In school yards, what would have a generation ago been a fist fight now becomes a blood bath. Since these tragedies, citizens all across my State of New Jersey have called louder than ever for passage of stricter gun safety laws. But despite the outcry, a few politicians in Congress here in Washington have stood in the doorway, have blocked reform, refusing to act on common sense gun safety proposals like those that the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) and I are sponsoring here in the House of Representatives.

On August 26, I was joined by my colleague and good friend, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY), for a public meeting in Plainsboro, New Jersey. The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) and I were joined at that event by 66 families who once again called on this body to act on sensible gun safety legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read into the RECORD a letter to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), the Speaker of the House, signed by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY), myself, and 66 families who joined us in Plainsboro, which I will personally deliver to the Speaker this evening.

MR. SPEAKER, as concerned citizens of the State of New Jersey, we are writing to request your immediate assistance in having Congress consider gun safety legislation before Congress adjourns for the year.

As you know, in June of 1999, following the tragic murders at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, Congress considered a package of juvenile justice proposals. When this legislation was considered in the Senate, an amendment by Senator FRANK LAUTENBERG was attached that would close the dangerous gun show loophole, ban the importation of high-capacity ammunition magazines, and mandate the use of child safety locks on firearms.

These three proposals, which have been introduced in the House of Representatives, are mainstream, common sense measures that polls show are supported by a large bipartisan majority of the public. While we in New Jersey do not have gun shows, other States do. That undermines our gun safety laws because they allow criminals to buy dangerous firearms without background checks, waiting periods or identification at these shows. A law mandating child safety locks, if enacted, could save the lives of hundreds of young Americans.

Many of us visited Washington, D.C., as part of the "Million Mom March" this Spring.

And, I might add, I made that trip by bus from New Jersey, too.

In the many weeks since that watershed event, attended by thousands of Americans

from all parts of the Nation and all walks of life, no effort has been made to bring the Juvenile Justice legislation back before the House. In fact, these measures have remained bottled up with delay tactics and parliamentary maneuvering. Now, as less than 20 days remain in the scheduled legislative session, the need for leadership and action on this issue is greater than ever.

Stemming the tide of gun violence is an issue of deep importance to us and to our Nation. Now is the time for our leaders in Washington to roll up their sleeves, not sit on their hands. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to use your influence as the highest ranking Member of the House of Representatives to bring immediately these legislative proposals back before the Congress so that they can be sent to the President for his signature.

"Respectfully," and it is signed by 66 family members from central New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, I include the letter for the RECORD:

*August 26, 2000.*

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
Speaker of the House,  
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: As concerned citizens of the State of New Jersey, we are writing to request your immediate assistance in having Congress consider gun safety legislation before it adjourns for the year.

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Respectfully,

Signed by 66 New Jersey citizens.

Mr. Speaker, every school I visit, every PTA meeting that I attend, every classroom that I teach in, kids, moms and dads, in fact nearly everyone I talk with in New Jersey, tells me it is high time that Congress take action to keep guns out of the hands of kids and criminals.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents to join together to pass these common sense gun safety measures.

#### RACIAL PROFILING AND POLICE BRUTALITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, there is an issue of great potency brewing in the African American community such that I feel compelled to bring it to the attention of this body.

Like other Americans, African Americans are animated by the same issues. Education is at the top of the list. And of course, there is a Patients' Bill of Rights and preserving Social Security and Medicare.

But what amazes me from the data and, anecdotally, when looking at black publications in my own district, is a surprising issue that has greater interest and intensity than others; and that issue is racial profiling and police brutality.

This is most interesting because the African American community has embraced police because there was such high crime, especially in the early 1990's. Crime is down 10 percent now from last year, 34 percent over the last few years; and yet there is this intense hostility based on what is happening particularly to black men but also to black women.

If one has raised a boy the way that I have so that he gets to go to college, graduates in 4 years, has a good job, it does not make a dime's worth of difference if he is driving down a road and there is a sense that who he ought to pull over are black people rather than others.

So that, if we look at Interstate 95, where 17 percent of the drivers are African-Americans, 56 percent of those searched are black; or let us look at California in a 1997 study that showed that only 2 percent of 3,400 drivers stopped yielded contraband; or a recent study of racial profiling on I-95 here in the East, about 17 percent of those who drive along I-95 are African Americans but they represented 60 percent of the drivers searched in 1999.

Something is wrong with those figures. And it has now penetrated deep in the African American community and it knows no class bounds. The richest and most middle-class African Americans know that there is no difference

to a police officer who is looking for black people between a youngster that has done all he should do and somebody who may, in fact, be carrying drugs.

What amounts to a loss in the criminal justice system has occurred throughout the African American community where so many young African American men are caught up in the first place. We need to have that community where we had it when they began to embrace police in the 1980s, and we are losing them.

This body apparently had some recognition because under the present majority, H.R. 1443, which was a bill sponsored by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) was indeed passed in 1998, which allows the collection of certain kinds of information about traffic stops. This body passed it. It was sent to the Senate. The Senate Committee on the Judiciary never acted on it.

We need to pass this bill again. It is now called H.R. 118. We need to pass it. Because about the worst thing that can happen in our society is that people believe that criminal justice does not have justice. And it is very hard for me to believe that there is justice in the system when the disparities are as huge as this.

□ 1700

Obviously, most African Americans play by the rules. So when you do not know whether playing by the rules will get you pulled over or not, particularly if you are a young black man, the stereotypic person to pull over, the rage of a loss of confidence that you are operating in a fair system becomes very great.

This is an issue for us all. This is an issue we can eliminate simply by first studying it and coming to understand what its causes are. H.R. 118 does not ask this body to take specific steps now. We need to know what is happening and why it is happening. If, in fact, black Americans see that we do not care enough even to find out why these disparities exist, I think we are sending a horrific message, especially now as people get ready to go to the polls. They want to see whether or not something can be done. I am not asking that something be done during this session. I do believe that during this session we have to start the ball rolling so that we can know what, if anything, we can do about these very telling statistics.

#### A TRADITIONAL EDUCATION IS THE BEST EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHERWOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak briefly on two or three important topics or issues in education. First, we have done a more